***DRAFT of 1 April 2013***

**1.What conflict exists in your country between different types of water uses (e.g. agriculture, industry, tourism, among others)? What are the main challenges in your country concerning water resources and waste water management that impact on the realization of human rights?**

The following main conflicts exist among different types of water uses in Asia-Pacific:

* 80-90 per cent of all wastewater generated in developing countries is **discharged** **directly** into surface water bodies **without any treatment** (UN Water, 2008), often contaminating the drinking water supply and spreading disease. The People’s Republic of China, had over 200 million city dwellers in 1980, but only 35 small municipal wastewater treatment plants. As a result, up to 90 per cent of the estimated 37 billion cubic metres of sewerage discharges that year remained untreated. In Shanghai alone, only 4 per cent of the estimated 5 million cubic metres of wastewater was treated. In the same city, in 1979, 96 per cent of surface water samples collected were found to be contaminated with heavy metals. Such heavily polluted water could possibly be a contributor to the rapidly rising cancer morbidity and mortality rates in the People's Republic of China's industrial regions. More examples are shown in the table 1 (ref: <http://www.unep.or.jp/Ietc/Publications/TechPublications/TechPub-15/3-3AsiaPacific/3-5.asp>).



Table1: Impacts attributed to water pollution in selected cities

Source: UNESCAP (1993), State of Urbanisation in Asia and the Pacific 1993

* Conflicts among water users in urban and rural areas caused by the growing pace of **urbanisation** in Asia-Pacific countries exacerbating the problem (UN- HABITAT, 2010, <http://www.unescap.org/esd/apuf-5/documents/SACR.pdf>).
* Inadequate amount of **investments** (ex. impacting the level household water security in rural and urban areas): very often large sewerage systems comprising sewerage networks and sewage treatment plants are unviable for the rapidly growing towns, partly due to the required massive investments and also due to the lack of adequate capacity to plan, design and operate and maintain these systems (LCGGRM, ESCAP, 2012).
* **Different rates of water withdrawal** for agriculture, domestic purposes and industry: in all subregions of Asia and the Pacific, between 60% and 90% of water withdrawal is used for **agriculture.** At the regional level, the proportional use for domestic and industrial purposes rose from 13% to 22% between 1992 and 2002. For example, within South- East Asia, water use for agriculture in Myanmar and Cambodia is above 90% of the total use, whereas in Malaysia agriculture accounts for just over 60% of water use.
* **Poor sanitation and wastewater management** in developing countries lead to the contamination of fresh water sources and is a major cause of disease and death and affects also the health of eco-systems. The economic consequences of poor sanitation and discharge of untreated wastewater to the environment are also very high. For example a World Bank Study[[1]](#footnote-1) carried out for the South East Asian Region found that losses in annual GDP ranged from $450 million in Cambodia to more than $6 billion in Indonesia.
* The relatively **high costs** associated with sewage collection and treatment systems often deter investments. Consequently, barring a few exceptions, like PR China, little attention has been given in developing countries to the proper collection, treatment and disposal of wastewater.
* Thus, there is a **lack of awareness amongst policy makers** on the need to address the issue of **wastewater management**. Other options such as off-site sanitation systems and decentralised wastewater management systems (DEWATS) are not explored due to a lack of understanding amongst policy makers and planners and poor capacity of water and sanitation utility staff.

The major challenges existing in Asia and the Pacific concerning water resources and waste water management that impact on the realization of human rights are the following:

* Across the region, **water availability** varies greatly:
	1. For ex. South-East Asia has more than 150,000 cubic meters of available water per square kilometer, whereas the Pacific subregion (including Australia and New Zealand) has less than 30,000.
	2. Other Asia-Pacific subregions with high population densities have limited **water availability per capita**;
	3. East and North-East Asia and South and South-West Asia have less than 2,500 cubic meters per capita per year.
* Within the subregions, **water-use patterns** differ dramatically, reflecting differential levels of economic activity;
* Therefore, the relationship between **water availability** and **water use** in each river basin is **not balanced** to preserve water security. In shared basins, imbalance between water availability and demand for its use can threaten **multilateral cooperation** and harmony among riparian States;
* The impacts of **climate change** are already being felt adversely across the Asia –Pacific Region. These impacts include both severe floods and extreme low water levels in the rivers of the region. Improved sanitation and wastewater management is crucial for this region to maintain water security and enable the affected population to adapt to the impacts of climate change;
* **Shortage of water** is another challenging issue in many urban centers. But the concept of reusing and recycling water is not yet widely adopted for managing the growing water demand although it has been demonstrated that the recycling of “greywater” can reduce water demand by up to 40%;
* **Shared water management** is therefore essential in preventing conflict as well as ensuring water security, especially in the basins of the Aral Sea, Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna, Tarim and Mekong, each of which is shared by five to eight countries.

Thus, the commitments based on awareness regarding the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation need to be progressively realized in the region with full respect for national sovereignty, which would also address the conflicts and challenges between different users and management practices.

**2. How are different users prioritised in national legislation and policies? How are these priorities implemented in practices? Are there any implementation challenges? If yes, please elaborate on them and on measures taken to overcome them**

Asia Pacific region is diverse region, which contains different ecosystems, and different water users respectively. Therefore Intergovernmetal Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2007) has identified major challenges in each ecosystem in Asia and the Pacific:

* Melting of glaciers in Himalayas, which affects in increase of flooding, and rock avalanches
* Decrease of freshwater availability in Central, South, East and Southeast Asia
* Increased flooding from the sea and, in some mega-deltas, from rivers in South, East and Southeast Asia
* Climate change in most developing countries
* Projected increase of crop yields up to 20% in East and Southeast Asia

Pacific Islands are vulnerable to climate change, facing other challenges from this.

At the same time, based on the ‘water insecurity framework’, ESCAP has identified water hotspots to measure and examine the indicators of water security from the environmental, economic and social perspective, and capacities of countries to achieve expected development outcomes sustainably (UNESCAP, 2010). The water hotspots show whether countries’ capacities to manage water resources for social-economic progress are improving or declining, and in turn whether social-economic progress has provided countries means ro confront water scarcity and water-induced conflicts and disasters. In this framework, water security is assessed according to ten indicators of water security, access to water and sanitation, water quality, and water-related disasters.

Main challenges would also include outdated water saving technologies, ineffective early warning system and preventive measures, thus, different level of application of IWRM approaches and tools. In order to address the above mentioned issues and challenges in Asia and the Pacific the following steps were taken:

* Since its inception in 1996, the Global Water Partnership (GWP) has built up a network of Regional Water Partnerships. The Network currently comprises 13 Regional Water Partnerships and 80 Country Water Partnerships, and includes more than 2,400 Partners located in 158 countries, including regional offices in Central Asia and Caucasus, China, South Asia, Southeast Asia.
* Today countries of the region are meeting different water-related challenges. Some countries of Asia and the Pacific have already applied some policies, such as water pricing policy in Singapore, adaptation and introduction of environmental indicators in Kazakhstan, application of Integrated water resources management schemes in countries (Philippines, Singapore) and basins (Mekong River Comission, International Fund for saving the Aral Sea), wastewater system and water reuse scheme in Australia.
* The three significant river basins of the region – Aral Sea, Ganges-Brahmaputra, and Mekong River basins – has set up the cooperation by creating organizations with participation of all countries included in the basin. Thus, the countries of the Aral Sea basin have established the International Fund for saving the Aral Sea (IFAS), Mekong river basin - the Mekong River Commission (MRC) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and Ganges-Brahmaputra basin - the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).

***Central Asia:*** In order to solve the problems countries of Central Asia have commited to establish International Fund for Saving the Araal Sea, which is a platform of dialogue among countries for development and implementation of bilateral, multilateral and international agreements. Three countries among five have signed and ratified the UNECE Water Convention that is intended to strengthen national measures for the protection and ecologically sound management of transboundary surface waters and ground waters. The Convention obliges Parties to prevent, control and reduce transboundary impact, use transboundary waters in a reasonable and equitable way and ensure their sustainable management. Parties bordering the same transboundary waters shall cooperate by entering into specific agreements and establishing joint bodies. The Convention includes provisions on monitoring, research and development, consultations, warning and alarm systems, mutual assistance, and exchange of information, as well as access to information by the public. Another example is Kazakhstan’s legislature. The main directions of the national development in water field are identified in the National Development Strategy Kazakhstan-2030, which was replaced by the Strategy Kazakhstan-2050 of December 2012. The importance of providing the population with affordable drinking water is shown as a high priority for the national development. Kazakhstan has adopted the Water Code in 2005, it identifies the principles of water use and regulates relations among main water users. The main goal of the Water Code is achieving and maintenance of environmentally safe and economically optimal level of water use and conservation of water fund, water supply and wastewater disposal for preservation and improvement of livelihoods of population and environment. Currently a draft of the Law on Drinking Water is being developed. Given draft should set basic provisions in legislation regarding people’s access to the drinking water. Yet those matters are regulated mainly by normative acts (State Standards, sanitary regulations and standards).

***South Asia:*** In order to address challeges arose in South Asian region South Asian Association for regional cooperation (SAARC) was estableshed. The areas among all that SAARC is working on include agriculture and rural, and environment. In SAARC Charter of Democracy countries comitted to “promote sustainable development and alleviation of poverty through good governance, equitable and participatory processes” and to “encourage all democratic forces in South Asia, including elected representatives of the people, to unite against any unconstitutional change in government in any South Asian country, and work towards the restoration of democracy in keeping with the SAARC Charter”. Area Water Partnerships (AWPs, please refer at a web page: <http://www.rrcap.ait.asia/nsds/uploadedfiles/file/sa/reference/SSDS%20SA.pdf>) provide a platform to various stakeholders to interact in the water sector so as to achieve integrated water resources management (IWRM) at the local level. The AWP concept was a unique initiative in South Asia to move the partnerships to the ground level, in order to move from vision to action. During the period 2001–2004, between 30 and 39 AWPs were formed in South Asia. This number varies in different reports. AWPs, developed as independent platforms for promoting IWRM at the local levels, allow the stakeholders to participate in dialogues and decision making, as well as influence the existing policies. The role played by AWPs is documented in Global Water Partnerships (GWPs). The AWP experience in South Asia also underlines the need for local action in order to resolve IWRM problems, to keep the IWRM dialogues alive, and to bring about solutions to the emerging problems, especially at the community level. It has been realized that these inexpensive local actions will help promote mutual trust in order to move towards higher-level dialogues and interventions. Since IWRM is considered to be best handled in a decentralized mode in a river basin/sub-basin context, the AWPs operating at present are largely located on the basis of natural resource units, i.e., at the river basin or sub-basin levels. However, the AWP concept is not confined to natural basins alone. AWPs are largely but not necessarily partnerships in a natural or ecological basin, often cutting across political boundaries yet remaining within the Country Water Partnership (CWP). *Example of Impact on National Policy: e*xperiences differ among AWPs in each of the five countries (Table 2). From the Indian experience, Purna River Basin Water Partnership (PRBWP) may be in a position to influence state policies, while other AWPs cannot be evaluated as these early efforts may not be visible. AWPs might not have been effective across all the regions but there could be several other organizations that have influenced policy at the state or national policy level. As a matter of fact, the effectiveness of AWPs has to be judged by the extent of their impact on policy-level issues; project activities are only short-term activities.



Table 2: Impact of AWP actions on national policies, SSDS SA, 2009 and GWP, 2005 .

***Southeast Asia:*** In Southeast Asia there are several organizations working, including Mekong River Comission (MRC), Greater Mekong Subregion Environment operation center (MRC-EOC) and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Since its establishment in 1995, the Mekong River Commission (MRC) has strived to develop work programmes and strategies that best serve its mission to provide effective support for sustainable management and development of water and related resources. In 2011 MRC has adopted two strategies: IWRM-based Basin Developemtn Strategy, and the 2011-2015 Strategic Plan. The IWRM-based strategy provides regional and transboundary perspectives for basin development planning, representing over a decade of collaboration between Member Countries on their shared understanding of the river’s opportunities and risks associated with development. Meanwhile, the strategic plan for the 2011-2015 period will support the implementation of this Strategy as well as providing a platform for the MRC’s plan to decentralise core functions of the MRC Secretariat to the national level.GMS-EOC has the following achievements:

* Significant progress in building GMS government awareness and understanding of [Strategic Environment Assessments (SEAs)](http://www.gms-eoc.org/strategic-environmental-assessments) as a decision-support tool.
* Seven pilot sites have been established under the [Biodiversity Conservation Corridors Initiative (BCI)](http://www.gms-eoc.org/biodiversity-conservation-corridors-initiative), encompassing more than 1.2 million hectares and involving over 28,000 beneficiary households.
* [Environmental Performance Assessment (EPA)](http://www.gms-eoc.org/environmental-performance-assessment) is now well accepted in the subregion as an environmental monitoring and management tool. CEP-BCI has successfully supported GMS countries in strengthening their institutional and technical capacities to collect, compile, analyze, and disseminate environmental data.
* CEP-BCI’s is increasingly integrating [climate change](http://www.gms-eoc.org/climate-change) considerations throughout all of its work and is already contributing to GMS knowledge on adaptation and mitigation.
* CEP-BCI’s [capacity building work](http://www.gms-eoc.org/capacity-building) has led to a progressively strengthened and secure role for the GMS Working Group on Environment to support the mainstreaming of sound environmental management within GMS economic development.

***The Pacific subregion:*** The Pacific Islands Applied Geoscience Commission (SOPAC) was established in order "to help Pacific island people position themselves to respond effectively to the challenges they face and make informed decisions about their future and the future they wish to leave for the generations that follow." The purpose of SOPAC is to ensure the earth sciences are utilised fully in order to fulfill the SPC Mission.  In the island context the earth sciences comprise geology, geophysics, oceanography and hydrology. To fulfill this, the division has three technical work programmes:

* Ocean and Islands
* Water and Sanitation
* Disaster Reduction

The work programme is reviewed annually by a technical advisory group consisting of members, Secretariat representatives and a Science, Technology and Resources Network (STAR).

***East and Northeast Asia:*** In East and Northeast Asia it is also possible to observe good practices and good progress in providing water rights of population. Therefore, Republic of Korea has applied green growth policy framework as a tool for further transition to a green economy. At the same time there are two forums that have network in the whole region: Korea Water forum and Japan Water forum. Japan Water Forum, through its energy and commitment, promotes an understanding of the fundamental impact of water on everyone's lives, leading to decisive action to address the water issues on the planet. JWF is developing a broad range of activities, including policy recommendations, grass-roots activities, diffusing Japan's accumulated water-related knowhow and technologies to the world at various international exhibitions and conferences, capacity developemtn and awareness raising.

***Steps taken at the regional level:***

* In 2005, the Asia-Pacific region initiated the concept of green growth at the Fifth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific (MCED-5) in Seoul, Republic of Korea;
* ESCAP has developed Low Carbon Green Growth Roadmap, where eco-efficient water infrastructure was briefly described, as well as solutions for some water related issues were proposed;
* Together with ESCAP Asia-Pacific Water Forum was initiated by the participants during the 4WWF Regional Preparatory Process that was coordinated by the Japan Water Forum (JWF). In calling for the creation of the Asia-Pacific Water Forum (APWF), the region's water ministers sought to establish an effective mechanism to encourage more collaborative efforts on water resources management and to accelerate the process of effective integration of water resources management into the socio-economic development process of the Asian and Pacific region. The approach of the APWF's network organization will be to add value to the ongoing work of organizations and initiatives in the water sector in terms of investment, optimizing implementation arrangements, achieving economies of scale, and developing unified approaches to water policies and programs. After all, the goal of the APWF is not to create an additional bureaucracy or a new administration, but to "contribute to sustainable water management in order to achieve the MDGs in Asia and the Pacific by capitalizing on the region’s diversity and rich history of experience in dealing with water as a fundamental part of the human existence."

**3. What strategies, approaches and mechanisms guide water resources and wastewater management? How do these ensure that the basic needs of the entire population are met?**

Water has always been one of the most significant resources for the human condition, ranging from meeting basic needs to supporting economic growth. Thus, Water Security is the capacity of a population to safeguard sustainable access to adequate quantities of and acceptable quality water for sustaining livelihoods, human well-being, and socio-economic development, for ensuring protection against water-borne pollution and water-related disasters, and for preserving ecosystems in a climate of peace and political stability[[2]](#footnote-2)

Low Carbon Green Growth Roadmap (ESCAP, 2012) guides water management towards eco-efficient water resource management which is critical to achieve prosperity. Poor management of water resources is decreasing per capita availability. Despite a large total endowment of freshwater resources, the availability per capita in the Asia-Pacific region is the second-lowest in the world as a result of population size and misuse and overuse of the supply. Wastewater treatment is a particular concern because it affects eco-systems. A large portion of wastewater generated is either discharged directly into open subsoil, which leads to water-quality problems and thus supply constraints.

Eco-efficient water infrastructure requires a shift in policies, from piecemeal to integrated, and a shift in infrastructure design, from centralized single-purpose to decentralized and multipurpose. Both policies and infrastructure need to integrate water supply, rainwater harvesting, wastewater treatment and recycling and flood control measures.

In order to address the need for expanding and improving wastewater treatment and reuse decentralized wastewater management system (DEWATS) was adopted by UNCSD at its 13th Session of 2005. DEWATS is promoted by ESCAP in cooperation with HABITAT within a new joint project in 2013-2015 in three countries of South East Asia and provides an appropriate and low-cost solution to the wastewater problem in many situations in the rapidly urbanising areas of developing countries where neither on-site sanitation systems nor large centralised sewerage systems are suitable. DEWATS is a good option for the reduction of pollution and the associated costs for treating water to drinking water quality standards, as well as business opportunity that has not been adequately explored. The use of treated effluent can support agricultural production which in turn contributes towards better food security and livelihoods. There is also potential for small enterprise development for operating and maintaining DEWATS. Making the DEWATS option available to communities can encourage households to improve their own sanitation conditions. This can bring significant benefits to poor communities, particularly women.

 For example, Singapore’s Active, Beautiful and Clean (ABC) Waters Programme shows a remarkable re-orientation of policy and thinking. Moving away from a historically grounded engineering approach that regards infrastructure resources as economic goods, the city-state now embraces many of the principles of eco-efficiency by looking at water as a means to improve the quality of life of Singaporeans and the attractiveness of the city as a whole. Water infrastructure management has been integrated as part of the planning and design of the city o that local communities can enjoy the waterways as engaging features in their urban landscape. The ABC Waters Programme recognizes that waterways and reservoirs can do more than just meet the city’s water needs. They can provide recreational opportunities (water sports or resting), a venue for cultural events (festivals, performances) or tranquillity for relaxation and community bonding. They also provide indirect economic value in terms of employment (in landscaping or events management), competitiveness (such as attractiveness to foreign direct investment and tourism) and enhanced property values. In 2009, ABC water design duidelines were issued to provide reference to developers and industry professionals on how to integrate environmentally sustainable green features or ABC Waters features in their developments.

Another example is establishment in 2009 of Japan Water Consortium (JSC) as the Asia-Pacific Water Forum (APWF)’s KnowledgeHub for sanitation in the Asia-Pacific region. JSC is a unique organization that brings together Japan’s know-how and years of accumulated knowledge and experiences in wastewater, sludge and night soil management. JSC gathers through its five member organizations – the main agencies in charge of wastewater, sludge and night soil management in Japan – a comprehensive expertise in areas such as technology, management (operation and maintenance), human resource development, institutional and policy strengthening. To increase access to sanitation and promote sustainable sanitation improvement, JSC’s expertise covers a wide range of sanitation systems in the following fields:

* Basic sanitation (toilets)
* On-site sanitation (decentralized wastewater treatment systems such as the Packaged Aerated Wastewater Treatment Plant (PAWTP) or johkasou, night soil/sludge collection and treatment systems)
* Off-site sanitation (various scales and types of sewerage systems)
* Sludge recycling, wastewater reuse and energy recovery.

In addition, in May 2013 2nd Asia-Pacific Water Summit (2nd APWS) in chiang Mai, Thailand will be held. The theme of the summit is “Water Security: Leadership and Commitment, with special focus on water disaster challenges”. HWS has been selected as one of the seven priority areas for the focus area sessions (FAS). ESCAP is leading this specific area on HWS in partnership with HABITAT and JWF (ref: Chairs Summary-1st Synthesis meeting of April 2011). ESCAP together with partners will organize a Technical Workshop on HWS on 18 May 2013, to crystallize summary of the technical discussions as inputs to the FAS on 19 May 2013. Tentatively, it will provide the summary of the policy discussions, as further inputs to the Chair’s Summary of the 2nd APWS and the “Message from Chiang Mai 2nd APWS”.

**4. How does your organization ensure transparency, access to information and participation in decision making regarding water resources and wastewater management?**

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) is the regional development arm of the United Nations for the Asia-Pacific region. Made up of 62 member States, with a geographical scope that stretches from Turkey in the west to the Pacific island nation of Kiribati in the east, and from the Russian Federation in the north to New Zealand in the south, the region is home to 4.1 billion people, or two thirds of the world’s population. This makes ESCAP the most comprehensive of the United Nations five regional commissions, and the largest United Nations body serving the Asia-Pacific region with over 600 staff.

ESCAP is committed to a resilient Asia and the Pacific founded on shared prosperity, social equity and sustainability. Our vision is to be the most comprehensive multilateral platform for promoting cooperation among member States to achieve inclusive and sustainable economic and social development in Asia and the Pacific. ESCAP promotes rigorous analysis and peer learning in our 7 core areas of work; translates these findings into policy dialogues and recommendations; and provides good development practices, knowledge sharing and technical assistance to member States in the implementation of these recommendations. ESCAP uses its convening power to bring countries together to address issues through regional cooperation, including:

* Issues that all or a group of countries in the region face, for which it is necessary to learn from each other;
* Issues that benefit from regional or multi-country involvement;
* Issues that are transboundary in nature, or that would benefit from collaborative inter-country approaches;
* Issues that are of a sensitive or emerging nature and require further advocacy and negotiation.

ESCAP provides a forum for its member States that promotes regional cooperation and collective action, assisting countries in building and sustaining shared economic growth and social equity. In addition, ESCAP gives stronger participation to the smaller and often left out voices of the region, the least developed countries, the small island States and landlocked States.

ESCAP’s norm setting and policy work ultimately impacts people’s lives in a positive way by helping countries shape and implement a more balanced and inclusive development agenda for the region.

The ESCAP secretariat comprises the Office of the Executive Secretary, seven substantive Divisions (MPDD, TID, TD, ED, IDD, SDD, and SD), the Division of Administration, and the Programme Planning and Partnerships Division. The delivery of ESCAP’s programmes is supported by the subregional offices and the regional institutions.

ESCAP publishes **Statistical Yearbook for Asia and the Pacific** annually. The Yearbook provides decision makers, researchers and the general public with a snapshot of the Asia-Pacific region, including figures on population, education, labour, health and public services, the environment, inequality, plus the state of the economy and the new “global economy” – indicating where people are migrating, trading, travelling, communicating; and other important questions. Data are presented for the 58 regional ESCAP member States, as well as world, regional, subregional and economic aggregates, for comparison.

The Yearbook presents current trends and emerging topics in Asia and the Pacific, grouped around the themes of people, the environment, the economy and connectivity. It provides the international and regional community with key indicators, objective analyses of the current trends and emerging issues, along with data and charts. To maximize comparability across countries, subregions and regions, country-level data are sourced from international agencies that produce and compile data following international statistical standards.

The statistics presented thus provide evidence for guiding decision makers to develop and monitor national policies that address social, economic and environmental challenges. In the Yearbook the data regarding water resources is also presented.

Energy Security and Water Resources Section (ESWRS) within EDD ispromoting regional co-operation and strengthening regional capacity on energy and water resources management towards inclusive sustainable socio-economic development for all in Asia and the Pacific. ESWRS promotes:

1. Promote analysis and peer learning based on policy-science-technology interface

2. Translate findings into policy dialogues and recommendations

3. Provide good practices, knowledge sharing and TA to Member States on core issues of Energy and Water focus, as well as Nexus

The ESWRS Water Focus is on water security, water supply & sanitation, green growth and water management, capacity building, integrated water resources management, flood management, transboundary water, subregional and regional cooperation.

ESCAP’s norm setting and policy work that ultimately impacts people’s lives in a positive way by helping countries shape and implement a more balanced and inclusive development agenda for the region, through knowledge platforms, networks, policy dialogues, negotiations, integration with other thematic areas of intervention of ESCAP: Macroeconomic Policy and Development, Trade and Investment, Transport, Social Development; Environment and Sustainable Development Polisy and Sustainable Urbanization; Information and Communications Technology and Disaster Risk Reduction; Statistics

Key Strategic Priorities for the ESCAP region: Water underpins all economic-social activities and environmental sustainability. Water Resources Management requires strengthening through implementation of the green growth concept, including:-

* Increasing recognition of water as a valuable and scarce economic good for ESCAP countries and a fundamental requirement for green growth and sustainable development
* Implementation of actions to adapt to climate change including recognition of the IPCC findings on the uncertainty of water-related climate change projections, demonstrating the need for ‘no-regrets’ adaptive management and Integrated Water Resource Management and taking into account the particular vulnerability of the poor
* Promoting effective and coherent River Basin Master Plans as a tool for a holistic approach to natural water system/bodies management (rivers, lakes, wetlands and aquifers) to encompass trans-boundary challenges (including both national administrative divisions and international boundaries) to ensure environmental sustainability is recognized as integral to economic and social stability and equitable access to the resource
* Strengthening best practices for water-related disaster management and early warning systems in line with disaster risk reduction through integrated flood management within a river basin master plan
* Developing efficient and effective green water infrastructure in every water-use subsector, such as urban water management (including flood, pollution control, water supply and solid waste management in cities), agriculture, fisheries, transport, hydropower, energy, etc, with inclusive participation and consultation of all stakeholders to ensure sustainability
* Promoting reforms and policies to incentivize investment and innovation in efficient and effective water infrastructure technology which will synergize water, energy, and food security
* Promoting sustainable waste management and sanitation to improve water security and health (water access, water quality, water recycling)

Since 2007, ESCAP has completed **a number of pilot projects on water, wastewater and solid waste management** and has collected innovative practices for water and sanitation, particularly focusing on low-cost decentralized solutions. Through a series of workshops to disseminate good practices, ESCAP assisted local governments and their civil society partners to develop integrated and participatory strategies for water and wastewater management. ESCAP also coordinated the first Regional Launching of the International Year of Sanitation (IYS) at the First Asia-Pacific Water Summit held in Japan in 2007. ESCAP is currently implementing a programme aiming at promoting development of eco-efficient water infrastructure, in which innovative wastewater treatment approaches are promoted for river rehabilitation.

Through a series of activities ESCAP is supporting the recent initiative on **Wastewater Revolution in Asia** of the Secretariat of the United Nations Secretary General’s Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation (UNSGAB). The Wastewater Revolution in Asia initiative will provide the policy-level basis for many ESCAP-led activities through this Development Account project.

In March 22, 2013 ESWRS of ESCAP organized the **Commemoration of World Water Day**. The objective of this event was to raise awareness, both on the potential for increased cooperation, and on the challenges facing water management in light of the increase in demand for water access, allocation and services. The event will highlight water cooperation as a foundation for sustainable development, contributing to poverty reduction and social equity, including gender, and creation of economic opportunity, while preserving water resources, protecting the environment and building peace.

Commemoration of the World Water Day 2013 will provide an opportunity for sharing experiences on water cooperation. It will also highlight the regional preparatory process for the 2nd Asia Pacific Water Summit (APWS), jointly organized by the Government of Thailand and the Asia & the Pacific Water Forum, to be held on 19-20 May, 2013 in Chiang Mai, Thailand, under the theme “Water Security and Water-related Disaster Challenges: Leadership and Commitment”*.*

The new collaboration between UN-Habitat and ESCAP in 2013-2015 will address the need to promote understanding and awareness amongst planners and policy makers of the need for **improved waste water management and the efficacy of decentralised waste water management systems** as a viable option in many rapidly urbanising areas of the region. It will also promote business sector investments in such systems and thereby facilitate their adaptation at a larger scale.

5. **In your view, should water resources and waste water management be reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals/post-2015 development framework?**

Asia and the Pacific is an early achiever of the Millenium Developemtn Goal (MDG) of halving the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water (MDG Target 10). Unfortunately, this commendable achievement has been obtained with extremely uneven results among countries and with a further widening of the divide between rich and poor and between urban and rural populations. Furthermore, the target makes no distinction between secure piped access to households and other forms of improved water supply. And finally, the sanitation target has not been achieved[[3]](#footnote-3).

Household water security is a basic requirement of a quality of life, and would be ensured only with an established universal access to water and sanitation, necessary for human and environmental health and a livelihood creation. More than being simple basic needs, water and sanitation services are recognized as a crucial element that enables small household businesses to emerge and as a key to protecting households during water-related disasters and extreme weather events that otherwise would put personal investments and public health at risk.

Thus, the principle challenge of achieving household water security (HWS) is not so much of technology, but more critically bound policy and governance. These include, besides leadership and commitment, awareness and advocacy, appropriate policy, legal, and institutional frameworks, improved management instruments, transparent and innovative financing mechanisms in meeting the required MDG targets in water supply & sanitation, therefore, in achieving household water security.

Considering the current situation, it is necessary to make every effort to improve sanitation in the Asia-Pacific region. While accelerating our efforts to achieve the sanitation target of the MDGs, the new set of the specific international goal of improving sanitation beyond 2015 should be set up. The International community might be willing to establish a new goal of attaining universal and sustainable access to sanitation by 2025. This will be discussed at the Technical Workshop, lead by Japan Water Forum in cooperation with ESCAP and HABITAT at the 2nd APWS on Sustainable Sanitation: Solutions for Realizing Universal Access by 2025 in Asia and the Pacific, under the Focus Area Session on Household Water Security and Urban Water Security.

1. Economic Impacts of Sanitation in South East Asia (<http://www.wsp.org/wsp/sites/wsp.org/files/publications/Sanitation_Impact_Synthesis_2.pdf>) WSP, 2008 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <http://www.unwater.org/UNW_ABWS_launch.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Asian Water Development Outlook 2013 – Measuring Water Security in Asia and the Pacific, ADB, 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)